

**QUESTIONS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE INTERAGENCY WORKING GROUP
SHIP CHANNEL ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ISSUES**

Corpus Christi, Texas

April 19, 2012

BACKGROUND ON SELECT SHIP CHANNEL COMMUNITY EJ ISSUES

The neighborhoods along the Corpus Christi Ship Channel, also known as Refinery Row, are Environmental Justice communities. They are predominantly low-income, largely minority, and are exposed to environmental hazards from numerous sources. These communities are surrounded by major industrial facilities, by the Port of Corpus Christi and its related facilities and mobile sources, and by a major highway. The area had high ambient levels of benzene for over a decade. In addition, there is historic groundwater and soil contamination in the area.

Future plans for Corpus Christi include expansion of port activities -- including new coal exports, new Eagle Ford Shale crude storage and gas processing, raising and rebuilding the Harbor Bridge and locating it closer to the fence-line communities, and vastly increasing bulk dock tonnage. A new petroleum coke fired power plant is also permitted for directly across the ship channel from the neighborhoods at issue. Petroleum coke dust from piles already being stored at the Port is consistently blowing into adjacent neighborhoods.

There are many in the ship channel neighborhoods that would like to relocate to another part of the city, away from industry, the port and the highway. In addition, there are others in the neighborhoods that would like to see parts of these neighborhoods revitalized, particularly in light of their historic importance. And given the proximity between residences and industrial/port activities, we want to assure that industries and the port are adequately regulated and monitored to protect public health as much as possible.

QUESTION FOR IWG AGENCIES

Department of Housing and Urban Development

1. Please explain whether any of the following HUD programs (or others) might be used to help the ship channel communities with planning, buy outs, relocation assistance, moving of existing homes, rehabilitation of homes, and/or construction of additional low income housing away from port and industrial pollution sources:
 - Community Development Block Grants
 - Home Investment Partnerships Program
 - Self-Help Homeownership Opportunity Program
 - Demolition and Revitalization of Severely Distressed Public Housing
 - Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grants
2. Which of the programs that might be used require matching state/local funds?

3. We understand that past efforts to use HUD moneys in the area have failed because many homeowners do not have clear title. Has this been a problem in other communities where HUD works? Does HUD have programs, or know of programs, that would help with clearing title in these communities?
4. Are you aware of any successful models in similar communities that have combined some buy outs with community redevelopment?
5. Are there any other programs, grants, etc. that you are aware of that might help these communities? Are there funds/staff to help community members create (or revise previous) redevelopment plans for the area?
6. HUD's Environmental Justice Strategy states in part, "If the project is likely to raise environmental justice issues and has the potential for new or continued disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects on minority or low-income populations, the environmental review must consider mitigation or avoidance of adverse impacts from the project to the extent practicable." We are concerned about existing HUD sponsored apartments along Refinery Row (such as Lantana Square, Sea Breeze Sr. Apartments and Cost Terra Gonna). In addition we are concerned about construction of new low income housing in close proximity to industrial emissions. Are your plans still to move Northside Manor to a location closer to ship channel industrial facilities?
7. Is there an individual at HUD who could be our point of contact for answering questions and discussing ideas?

Department of Transportation

1. What can DOT do to mitigate impacts of a highway on an environmental justice community? Can DOT purchase land in addition to right of way? Can DOT include parks, trails along the highway?
2. Air pollution studies addressing pollution concentrations and road proximity suggest that buffer zones could be used to avoid high pollution exposures from roadways. Does DOT have funding to use such green buffers along the Harbor Bridge project to address air quality impacts?
3. Could any monies from the Paul S. Sarbanes Transit in the Parks program – or other DOT programs - be used in the ship channel neighborhoods to create green space to compensate for impacts of the proposed Harbor Bridge project?
4. What can DOT do to ensure that future plans for the Harbor Bridge Project are coordinated with community redevelopment plans? Will DOT commit to using creative means for increasing public involvement regarding the Harbor Bridge project – such as video, telephone interviews, small group meetings, charrettes, public opinion surveys, interactive video and kiosks, storefronts, etc. (all suggested on DOT's website)? In particular, we believe such public involvement should be solicited BEFORE the preferred alternatives are finalized. We do not believe that the current community advisory committee provides an adequate forum or includes adequate involvement from the most directly impacted communities.
5. Is there an individual (or individuals) at DOT that can serve as our contacts regarding issues of public involvement and whether there are transportation related funds that might be used to mitigate impacts on the ship channel neighborhoods?

Department of Homeland Security

1. Can your Pre-Disaster Mitigation program, Port Security Grant Program, Flood Mitigation Assistance Program, Buffer Zone Protection Program or Rail Transit Security Grant Program (or others) be used to move residents away from industrial or port hazards (for example Hydrogen Fluoride)? Can they be used for creating green buffers on vacant land between industrial/port and residential areas? Can they be used for improving monitoring and warning systems?
2. Are there other DHS or FEMA funds that could be used to help move residents further from industrial and/or port hazards?
3. Is there an individual at DHS who could be our point of contact for answering questions and discussing ideas?

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

1. Do USACE and the Port of Corpus Christi have a plan for accommodating the excess water traffic that increasing the height of the Harbor Bridge and increases commodity exports, including coal exports, would bring to an already crowded shipping channel?
2. What dredging projects have been approved within the past 10 years for Corpus Christi? Are there additional dredging projects pending approval? If so, where are these projects in the environmental approval process?
3. Is there an individual at U.S. ACE who could be our point of contact for answering questions and discussing ideas?

Department of Labor (OSHA)

1. What is OSHA doing regarding the recent hydrogen fluoride events at Citgo?
2. What is OSHA doing to address worker complaints regarding safety at Citgo?
3. What can OSHA do to encourage/assist Citgo to transition away from using HF?
4. Is there an individual at DOL/OSHA who could be our point of contact for answering questions and discussing ideas?

Department of Health and Human Services

1. Does HHS have any programs for training medical professionals in recognizing/treating environmental harm?
2. Does HHS have funding for mobile clinics in underserved neighborhoods? Can these clinics serve non-citizens?

Environmental Protection Agency

1. Can EPA provide input on the excess health burden increasing coal exports would bring to Corpus Christi's fenceline neighborhoods and what, if any, steps such an expansion would have to take in terms of environmental permitting? Should such trade develop in Corpus Christi's port, will EPA push for extra control measures such as: cold-ironing at the new docking facilities, ensuring that all locomotives are of a later engine vintage or are at the least retrofitted to minimize diesel PM, any sort of extra dust/PM control measures for the coal piles and transferring processes (such as geodesic domes)?

2. What is EPA doing about the ongoing problems with petroleum coke dust blowing from piles at the port onto adjacent neighborhoods? This problem has existed for years, but has recently gotten worse.
3. Will EPA exercise its oversight role – as provided by the Clean Air Act – to ensure that the NEPA analysis of the Harbor Bridge fully considers the air quality impacts to ship channel neighborhoods?
4. What is EPA currently doing to address flaring and upset problems from the Javelina facility?
5. What is EPA doing to address the HF events at Citgo?

White House Offices

1. Can the White House convene a meeting as a follow up to the IWG where the assigned individual from the different agencies can discuss the possible options for assisting the Corpus Christi EJ communities with efforts to relocate and redevelop?

General Question for Other Agencies:

1. What funding or other assistance does your agency have that might be used to help the Corpus Christi EJ communities with planning, buy outs, relocation assistance, moving of existing homes, rehabilitation of homes, and/or construction of additional low income housing away from the industrial district?
2. Is there an individual that can serve as our point of contact for discussion these issues and answering any questions?